

Senate panel's action would privatize Kelly AFB

The San Antonio depot is currently operating at about half its capacity

plans ongoing at Air Force depots in Texas and California would be stopped and their workloads divided among surviving depots in Georgia, Oklahoma and Utah under a measure approved Monday by a Senate panel.

The action was taken by the Senate Armed Services Committee's readiness subcommittee as the panel met behind closed

NASHINGTON (AP) — Privatization doors to consider next year's defense authorization bill, a congressional source said.

The amendment offered by Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., was "similar, though not identical" to language approved last week by a House National Security subcommittee, said the source, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Under orders not to discuss deliberations until the defense authorization is completed by the full committee later this week, Inhofe's office declined comment.

The House and Senate measures effectively would force the Air Force to abandon its plan to shield thousands of jobs at Kelly Air Force Base in San Antonio and McClellan AFB in Sacramento, Calif.

The congressional intent is to force the Air Force and the Clinton administration to follow the recommendations of the 1995 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission to transfer the Kelly and McClellan work to three surviving depots.

There has been sharp resentment within Congress to what has been widely viewed as White House meddling in the base-closing process for election-year gain in vote-rich California and Texas.

After the base-closure commission voted to shutter the depots at Kelly and McClellan, the administration rebounded with a plan to shield for five years some 16,000 of Kelly's 19,000 jobs and 8,700 of McClellan's 11,000 workers.

Under the administration's "privatization-in-place" plan, most of those jobs would remain once the defense work is taken over by private contractors.

Critics contend the privatization plan would cost hundreds of millions of dol-

lars more than outright closure of the t depots, and does nothing to reduce the excess capacity within the Air Force depot system. Currently, the depots are operating at about half capacity.

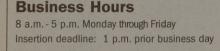
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Privatization supporters counter that military readiness would be harmed by the depots' shutdown, and that saving will result from turning the work over to private industry.

Ironically, even as Texas lawmakers are fighting to protect the privatization plan, many workers at Kelly and McClellan are pushing to have the workloads transferred to the three other depots.



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# McLaren, Republic followers indicted on standoff charges

FORT DAVIS (AP) — Republic of Texas, separatist leader Richard McLaren and four others were indicted Monday in the kidnapping that sparked a weeklong standoff with scores of

state troopers. McLaren, Gregg Paulson, Karen Paulson, and Robert Otto, also known as White Eagle, were each indicted on a single charge of engaging in organized criminal activity, a first degree felony. They could be sentenced to five to 99 years or life in prison and fined \$10,000 if convicted.

The fifth person's identity was withheld in a sealed indictment. It presumably is Richard F. Keyes III, who remains a fugitive.

The indictments allege the group participated in a scheme to kidnap two neighbors in the Davis Mountains Resort, a rough rural subdivision where the Republic members had set up an "embassy' in a trailer and wooden cabin.

McLaren and his followers contend Texas was never legally annexed by the United States and remains an independent republic.

The April 27 abduction, in retaliation for the arrest that day of a group member on weapons

charges, led to the standoff many people and so many agenci between the armed separatists and 300 Department of Public Safety troopers and Texas Rangers.

The siege ended May 3 after McLaren, the Paulsons and Otto agreed to lay down their weapons. McLaren's wife, Evelyn, had walked into custody earlier.

Keyes and McLaren body-guard Mike Matson

fled into the Davis Mountains wilderness. Matson was killed May 5 in a with shootout authorities.

No felony charges were sought against McLaren's wife or Robert Scheidt, the group member arrested the first day. "We did not have

enough evidence in our hand to connect them to the kidnapping," said James Jepson, first assistant district attorney for

Jeff Davis County and other surrounding counties. District Attorney Albert

Valadez said he was pleased with the indictments. "I was really impressed that so

Northeast Texas church burns on anniversary of other church fire

GREENVILLE (AP) — An abandoned church was destroyed by fire in this Northeast Texas town Monday as residents prepared a service to remember fires that destroyed two predominantly black churches last year.

Bethel United Methodist Church, which has been vacant about a year, was destroyed in the early-morning blaze. Two other churches burned on June 9 and June 10 last year in blazes later determined to be arson.

A representative of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms was looking into the fire at the southside church, a disbanded white church that

started in the front yard."

He said the church had disbanded by 1996, with members joining other congregations and their building transferred to a cemetery association.

A Greenville teen-ager in March struck a deal with prosecutors to avoid trial on two federal arson charges stemming from last summer's fires. The latest fire began about 1:30 a.m. Monday

in the vacant sanctuary of the church. There were no injuries.

"It was termed suspicious on the basis that it was a building where no one should have been in that time of night and had not been used or occupied," Greenville Fire Chief Robert Wood said. "It had n

did nothing to change his approach to the case. "It was handled like any I was really impressed

were able to work so well in harmo

ny" to investigate the case, he said.

tence that he should be treated as

a foreign diplomat - he is the

group's self-styled ambassador -

Valadez said McLaren's insis-

that so many people and so many agencies were able to work so well in harmony."

Jeff Davis County District Attorney

ed in Dallas along with his wife on federal charges of bank and mail

Valadez said Richard McLaren and the others indicted in Jeff Davis County will be tried together in Fort Davis.

Albert Valadez

other," he said. McLaren has also been indict-

fraud and conspiracy.



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was predominantly white.

"During the last couple of years, there had been quite a bit of vandalism at the church," said Walter Zimmerman, Paris-Sulphur Springs district superintendent for the North Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church. "There had been fires



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reason to burn. Greenville firefighters were aided by crews from Cash, an unincorporated community on Greenville's south side. But they were unable to save the onestory building.

### Investigators continue search for Friendswood girl's killer

Laura Smither disappeared during a morning jog

HOUSTON (AP) — A lot of leads, possible suspects, and even two confessions have surfaced in the investigation into the April disappearance and slaying of a 12-year-old suburban

Friendswood girl. But so far, the killer of Laura Smither has not been found. A pool of potential suspects has been narrowed from hundreds to 23. Autopsy tests are still being done to determine how the child died. And two confessions from arrestees in Florida and Houston have proven false.

Friendswood Police Chief Jared Stout says he's not surprised the case is taking a long time to solve. He also is not discouraged.

"Our feet are flat and will continue to be so," Stout said. "We thought we'd be in this for the long-haul. There is no statute of limitations.

Laura disappeared during a morning jog on April 3. Her body was found April 20 in a Pasadena pond about 20 minutes from her home.

"We're into our third month," Stout says. "The longer it goes, the more likely it will last a long time."

The case captured statewide and national attention. The homeschooled girl, who loved animals and ballet and who lived in the Quaker-founded city of Friendswood, seemed the most unlikely of crime victims.

Friendswood, reachable in

minutes south of Houston, is many ways a world away from th kind of pains that trouble the nation's fourth-largest city.

Stout said once Laura wa reported missing, his department with the help of the FBI began looking at the whereabou of convicted sex offenders who might be in the area.

Little did he know he'd be look ing at some 591 possibilities That's the number of inmates mostly sex offenders, released from prison in Brazoria, Galveston and southern Harris countie from Jan. 1, 1995, to this past April

Hopes were raised briefly in May when Ricky Rhodes, a 24 year-old transient, arrested in Orlando, Fla., reportedly bragged to cellmates he killed Laura.

But that and the claim about two weeks ago from a man arrest ed for theft in Harris County were both proven false.

And links to Laura's slaying and the disappearances of other girl in the state have not been sub stantiated, Stout said.

The Harris County medica examiner's office is still doing tests to complete the autops report and those may provide more clues, he said.

Stout is convinced a strange took Laura, but other than the there is little to do but keep for lowing up leads that still come to his office.